

Eddie Kaspbrak's: // pros and cons of (possibly but maybe not) dating Richie Tozier, one of my best friends.// by Pixueta

Category: IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT 2017, Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M, M/M, not just a love story!

Language: English

Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Frank Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, others - Character

Relationships: Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2019-08-31

Updated: 2019-12-09

Packaged: 2019-12-16 17:06:34

Rating: Not Rated

Warnings: Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

Chapters: 7

Words: 11,842

Publisher: archiveofourown.org

Summary:

The people we surround ourselves with, the environment we live in, the house we step foot in everyday influences us strongly; however, what truly, deeply changes our lives for the better is ourselves.

The moment we start to accept and love our mind, our body, our soul, is the moment everything starts moving, as if up until that moment we had lived life in slow motion.

//

Eddie Kaspbrak discovers himself and slowly unravels the secrets and lies Sonia has built around him all of his life. Will he be able to live with the truth?

1. I

Author's Note:

Hi everyone!

It took me a while but I decided to post this story, which I will be writing as a sort of distraction from my anxiety.

It's a reddie story, but it's not only centered on the development of their relationship. So please be patient cause it may or may not be slow burn.

The people we surround ourselves with, the environment we live in, the house we step foot in everyday influences us strongly; however, what truly, deeply changes our lives for the better is ourselves.

The moment we start to accept and love our mind, our body, our soul, is the moment everything starts moving, as if up until that moment we had lived life in slow motion.

That's exactly how Eddie Kaspbrak felt on the night he stood up to his mother, yelling at her for lying to him about his illnesses and his supposedly vital medications.

The moment he looked her firmly in the eyes, Mrs. K had known she had lost her son, and she had to do *anything* to retain him, to keep him with her.

The moment Eddie lifted that aspirator and threw it in the air, those slow-motion movements turned into full speed emotions, making him feel as though he was out of breath. And it certainly was not an asthma attack.

Though he was only twelve at the time and had no idea about it, that moment would change his life forever.

At fifteen, Eddie started unraveling a new, marvelous part of himself: his sexuality. At almost fifteen, just past the age of blind, childish

foolishness, he started seeing the world with different colors and in different angles.

It all started out on a normal January day: he woke up, got ready for school, grabbed his things and went to meet Bill at the bus stop.

While he was on the bus, he kept on looking at the couple two rows ahead of them, holding hands and exchanging disgustingly sweet looks. When the boy leaned in to kiss the girl, Eddie looked away, his face hot with embarrassment.

“Whu-what is it, Eddie? Are you feeling desperate for a girlfriend, too?” Bill teased him, his stutter now almost forgotten after years of therapy.

“As if!” the smaller boy exclaimed, looking offended – why did he feel that way, though? Richie was always telling stories about the girls he messed around with, Ben was with Beverly and Bill often made a comment about some girl that caught his eye. Mike was the group's softie, always hoping to find true love somewhere in the dark heart of Derry...and Eddie?

Well, Eddie hadn't really thought about it that much up until that January day.

And he wished, that day, that he hadn't thought about it *at all*, since all he could do was think about how soft the boy's hair must be, and how nice it would feel to receive a kiss like that.

He wasn't stupid, okay?

He knew, ever since he was old enough to comprehend that boys liked girls and girls liked boys, that he was in certain ways closer to boys than girls; and he blamed it all on the fact that he was a child and he didn't need to worry about those things.

But growing up meant seeing things on a whole new level, and he wasn't sure he was ready to accept that.

As soon as the Losers gathered around Bill's locker, as usual, Eddie started to forget about his worries, smiling at Stan and Richie's bickering, Beverly and Ben's lovey attitude and quietly talking to Bill.

"Is everything okay, Eddie? You seem...off, ever since guh-getting on the bus" Bill sounded pretty worried. Was he really that obvious?

"I'm fine," the other one smiled at him, hoping he was convincing enough "just a bit tired."

He wasn't used to lying, especially to Bill – he was the one he was closer with, even more so than Richie, with whom he had a different relationship.

"What's got you hot and bothered, Eddie Spaghetti? Is it my handsomeness?" Richie exclaimed, pulling him closer and holding him so he couldn't escape, no matter how hard he wiggled around.

"You wish!" Eddie snorted back, suddenly very much aware of how his friend's body felt against his, of his horrendous but oh-so-endearing way of dressing up, of his vague smell of cigarettes, of the way his glasses fell on his nose...Eddie violently shook his head, almost laughing to himself – how could he even think something like that about *Richie*?

Richie was loud, annoying, had a foul mouth, a beautiful mouth to be honest...slightly chapped and those arms and that neck and jawline manly enough to make his knees weak.

Suddenly, as if touching him burnt him, Eddie was able to tear away from the taller one, looking at him in shock and mild disgust – only he wasn't disgusted with his long-time friend, but with his own thoughts.

They exchanged a long look, while the others pretended not to pay attention to them, in which Richie seemed to say '*What the heck just happened, Eds?*'. He just huffed, stomped his feet and went away grumbling a see you later.

Coming lunchtime, Eddie was still very, very grumpy.

Because one thing was to like boys, another was to like freaking Trashmouth Tozier, *his* Richie, part of the Losers, of his family.

It didn't help the fact that they shared a few classes, and the fact that he had looked very hurt when Eddie decided to sit somewhere else instead of sitting with him, and that he kept on giving him big confused puppy dog eyes.

And honestly?

Eddie was about to stand up, slap him for being him, and then kiss him, and slap himself and never step foot out of the house again.

Richie, being himself, kept on pushing Eddie into telling him what was up. So he sat next to him during lunch, stealing some of his fries and obnoxiously poking his sides from time to time, ignoring the huffs Eddie was letting out as a warning to just *stop*.

"Okay, Eddie, I'm the only one who will say it so please, for the love of whatever freaking thing is up there, spit it out. What's up?" Stan mercilessly said, irritated by his friend's bitchy attitude; he had barley participated in the conversation, and then proceeded to snob every suggestion about the plans for Saturday.

"What, I can't have a bad day?" Eddie snapped, maybe a little bit too harsh for the situation "Big freakin news, I *can*! And I don't have to tell you everything, either!"

The hurt look on the Losers was enough to let Eddie know he said something wrong: of course he had to tell them everything, they were family. And family helped each other, stood by each other. He was never one to keep things from them, and obviously the new change in attitude had them all surprised and disappointed.

"It's okay, guys" Ben stepped in, calmly speaking "maybe we all need to calm down. Eddie's having an off day, no big deal."

Beverly lovingly squeezed Eddie's hand, giving him a reassuring smile and being...Beverly. Bill, on the other hand, was still intently staring at him, brows furrowed and everything, as if he were trying to tear him apart and analyze every inch of him.

"Sorry" Eddie mumbled, standing up "I'm gonna go get ready for next period."

"What was *that*?" Stan said as soon as his friend was out of sight
"He's so out of himself, he hasn't been this way in a long, long time."
"Did I do something?" Richie asked, confused.
"You always do something" Stan interjected, but Bill shook his head.
"No. Something's bothering him, ever since this...this morning, on the bus, shit! I think I said something that upset him, but I don't get *why* it offended him."

That line in the bus kept on going on and on in Bill's head – *Whu-what is it, Eddie? Are you feeling desperate for a girlfriend, too?* –, and still, it made no sense.
Unless...Eddie *had a girlfriend* and hadn't said anything to anyone?
Could it be?

Eddie went home right after school that day, only stopping briefly at Bill's locker to say goodbye to his friends, giving Stanley a 'sorry' stare.
As he walked home, lost in thought, he heard voices coming from an alley. Voices he surely knew, but he couldn't quite place his finger on who it was.

So, thanking mother nature for his small figure, he hid behind some trash cans to listen on the whispering.
"Come on, Vic, we better get the fuck outta here" Henry Bower's voice still made his skin crawl, even long after he stopped being a bully.

No one ever knew why or how he stopped, but one day their gang kind of broke apart, leaving Vic and Henry and Patrick and Belch. Bowers still wasn't the kindest boy on earth: he still gave you harsh stares and remarks if you looked at him too much, or if you accidentally bumped into him in the halls, but there was no more tormenting kids, or beating them up – *no carving words into their skin*

like that one time with Ben –, simply nothing.

“Five more minutes” the other one said, a hint of a smirk on his face “it’s not like anyone ever comes around here anyways.”

Eddie finally gathered up the courage to peer around his hiding spot, only to see something he never thought he’d see: Henry kissing Vic softly on the lips, smiling as he did so. Vic wrapped his arms around the other boy, pulling him closer and sighing in content.

Fighting the urge to gasp or squeal in surprise, Eddie slowly crawled out of the alley and speed-walked home.

He simply grumbled an hello to his mom before running to his room and shutting the door behind him – nothing uncommon those days, with the only difference that on that particular January day, Eddie had a lot to think about.

He spent the afternoon contemplating whether he was more stunned by the fact that he *maybe* liked his long time friend or the fact that he saw Henry freakin’ Bowers kiss a boy.

He wondered how it felt to kiss a boy and be kissed back, amazed by how soft it looked instead of the roughness he had pictured in his mind. He ran through that moment he had witnessed over and over again, until he snapped out of it right when the vinyl stopped playing ‘I wanna hold your hand’ by the Beatles and he changed Henry’s face with Richie’s and Vic’s with his own.

Huffing, he stood up and put another vinyl on, which he had gotten at a very cheap price with Beverly, who was the best at digging around thrift stores. Nothing compares 2 U started playing and he fell on his desk chair, feeling like a schoolgirl who just discovered what having a crush is like.

Then, a stupid idea popped in his mind: what if he made a *list* of reasons why he shouldn't even think of Richie as anything more than a friend?

He grabbed a pencil and a sheet of paper, all too enthusiastic about an idea that childish...

Sure enough, in a few minutes the list turned into: *pros and cons of (possibly but maybe not) dating Richie Tozier, one of my best friends.*

The title was not so great, he admitted it, but he divided the page in two nonetheless and started writing down pros and cons.

It went a little like this: he's cute – he's *RICHIE*, he makes me laugh – he's obnoxious, he knows me well – he is ONE OF MY BEST FRIENDS!!!, he has nice lips and eyes and arms..etc – he might not be attracted to boys.

Then he added a final sentence: *and he might hate me if I ever told him that I liked him.*

Eddie knew he had been spending way too much time thinking about the same thing when he started feeling a full on headache coming on.

He decided he'd go out, have a walk to clear his mind.

But the center of his problems decided to show up unannounced at his window.

“Hey!” Richie exclaimed, trying to fit his long limbs in the window.

Eddie jumped, cursing under his breath, and quickly folded the small piece of paper, putting it under a book.

“Rich!” he said, “What are you doing here?”

“You looked pretty upset todayeh Mr. Kaspbrak. Wanna talk about it with Dr. Tozier?” he flopped on Eddie's bed, arms behind his head and everything, a big grin on his face.

“It was nothing really” Eddie said, trying to ignore how Richie's shirt raised just enough to show his happy trail – shit, when did he get so hairy? Eddie looked like a newborn baby, with almost no hair at all.

“C'mere” Richie said, opening his arms for him. It was nothing uncommon between the two, on the contrary it was usual for them to be very touchy and cuddly, but this time it felt different.

Eddie gave in to the temptation, thinking that if he wanted to really understand if he *liked* liked his friend, he had to keep on acting normal. So he crashed on the bed with him, snuggling closer and closing his eyes as his scent filled his nose.

“Please, I don't feel like talking about it” Eddie said, anticipating the questions “it's...something I have to figure out alone, okay?” Richie hummed in response, and after a bit they both fell asleep to each other's breathing.

2. II

Summary for the Chapter:

As soon as everyone settled up to go to sleep, Eddie felt tears burn his eyes. Feeling Richie pulling him closer to him while he slept made him all the more emotional; you see, he wasn't just afraid of rejection. He didn't want to risk losing what they had: the snarky remarks, the constant bickering, the heart to heart conversation, the totally unnecessary touching, their 'nap dates', their dynamic.

Little did he know that what felt like a crush, would turn out to be much more.

And little did he know, that at the same time just a couple blocks far from Bill's house, Sonia was having a very heated conversation.

There's nothing Richie loved more than Saturdays at Bill's.

Out of all the Losers, he was the one who lacked affection and love the most, with his parents barely remembering they had a son. So gathering up for the weekend at Bill's was like a big family reunion in which he was showered with attention – be it an hug, a smile, the presence of the others or even a snarky remark by Stan, he equally appreciated it.

On Saturdays, Richie was the first one to show up to the house, bringing all sorts of snacks and lots of laughter.

“Richie!” George screamed every time he arrived, hugging him.

Georgie *loved* him to death. According to him, Richie was the funniest, the coolest, the weirdest and the one who taught him the most uncommon bad words. Stan insisted he invented them, but Georgie was sure he was simply far too boring to know those words.

“Hi there, badass!” Richie exclaimed, looking a kid himself. He threw his bags to the ground and lifted the boy up in the air, joy filling up

his chest just by hearing him laugh.

“Told ya' it was Rich” Bill said, coming down the stairs followed by Stanley “he's only ever this loud when he comes. Sometimes I think he'd swap me ov-over for him anytime.”

“It's just my charm, Billy boy” Richie said, flashing a toothy smile
“And why are you here this early, Birdman?”

“I feel a headache coming on” Stan deadpanned, avoiding his question.

Richie frowned as Bill cleared his throat and said “Okay, let's set everything up before the others arrive.”

The three began pushing the furniture around so that there was enough space for the seven.

Richie watched as Bill exchanged silent conversations with Stan and felt a little bit offended by the fact that they were keeping something from him.

“Okay, what's got your panties in a twist, ladies?” he finally asked when they started whispering.

“Nothing!” Stan said, and then the doorbell rang.

Eddie, Beverly and Ben came in and Richie soon forgot about the question he had asked. Only Mike came a little bit later because he had to do chores for his granddad before going out.

Eddie soon began working on getting everything set up for when Mike arrived and they'd watch films. It was something he always did, and he was thankful for that since he could avoid Richie for a while.

He started dividing popcorn and chips in different bowls, all while frying an absurd quantity of fries.

Beverly came in the kitchen and leaned against the counter, an amused

smile on her face “I get that you enjoy cooking, but you seem too frantic, even for being Eddie Kaspbrak.”

“Ah—” Eddie said, looking unsure “I’m okay.”

“Yeah, and I’m a good mannered lady” she replied, rolling her eyes and sitting on the kitchen isle. She observed him going around the kitchen looking like a tornado: he was frying, grabbing glasses and stacking plates all at once.

“Eddie.”

She sounded dead serious, so he stopped dead in his tracks and sighed: when Beverly Marsh wanted something, she obtained it.

“I know – *we all* know something’s on your mind. You’re part of our family, we know all of your quirks and all of your moods by heart. For example, you get bitchy when you don’t sleep well. You get mean if you feel threatened. You get itchy and start doing *this* when something gives you anxiety.”

Eddie cast his eyes downwards, feeling like he got caught doing something bad – only he didn’t do anything, right?

Beverly sighed.

“Look, I don’t want to force you into saying anything. Just – just know that we love you and, whatever it is that is bothering you, we can help you go through it all.”

As soon as he was alone, the small boy started crying. He cried because he felt a horrible friend for not telling them what was going on, because he was ashamed of himself, because he feared they’d hate him and because he felt the love radiating off of Beverly’s words.

After a good five minutes of nonstop crying, he dried his tears and went back to cooking.

He felt a little less anxious after what his friend said to him, a thought starting to bloom in his head: what if they didn't care? What if he was just over-thinking everything?

Either way, it was just too risky to tell them straight ahead. He'd have to wait and come up with some sort of plan first.

He finished cooking and brought everything in the living room, where Mike had finally arrived.

He greeted Eddie with a big hug, eyeing the food he had just carried "Oh gosh, you're the best!"

As everyone bickered and tried to settle on a movie, Eddie could feel someone staring at him – sure enough, it was Bill. He was intently looking at Eddie's puffed face, cocking a brow. Of course he would notice he had been crying. The smaller boy gave him half a smile.

Finally, when they agreed they'd watch *The Neverending Story II*, the Losers started occupying their places.

Mike, Bev and Ben were all sitting at the feet of the couch, buried under big soft blankets.

Stanley and Bill took up the whole couch, the first leaning his head on his friend's shoulder, and Richie chose the armchair as usual.

Eddie looked at him, cheeks flushed, and the lanky boy opened his arms to welcome him in their usual spot. The asthmatic sat on Richie's lap, cuddling up to him and inhaling deeply.

Eddie could do nothing but think of the fact that he was, in a way, taking advantage of him. Richie knew nothing about his 'crush' for him, and he continued acting as always, hugging him, letting him close...but what would happen if Eddie confessed? Would he push him away in disgust?

As he kept on thinking over and over the same things, the movie ended and everyone stretched out of their seats.

Stan had fallen asleep, so Bill offered to carry him upstairs while the

others put everything back in place; Zack and Sharon were more than okay with the Losers using their house as a meeting place, but they'd get pretty upset if they left a mess around.

"Can I help you, Eddie dea-h?" Richie said, his English accent getting more and more persistent with each day.

"I'm only carrying, like, three cups" the other one deadpanned, trying to hide his smile at his friend's cute gestures. Behind all of his dirty jokes and the voices, Richie really was a sweetheart...he just had a weird way of showing it.

"Doesn't matter" Richie shrugged, adjusting his glasses before helping him out "so. You haven't really told me anything about how things are at home?"

"Everything the same" Eddie sighed, "we don't talk, barely ever at home at the same times...you know? What about you?"

Richie hummed in response, then gave him a sideways glance.

"I haven't seen them in two weeks. I just got a note saying Went left for some bullshit work thing and Maggie was at some aunt's – I don't even knew I had aunts, but okay."

Eddie left the now empty bowls on the counter, sitting on the edge of it and looking at Richie expectantly, silently letting him know that if he wanted to let it all out, he could.

In fact, the lanky boy took off his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose "I feel like I don't even know them, Eds. And the sad thing is... I do have memories of them being loving and of us being a happy family. It's just I don't know how this all happened."

"I wonder if things would've been different if my dad hadn't died" Eddie blurted out, feeling touched by his friend's words.

They shared a moment of silent comfort before Richie loudly burped.

"Here he goes again..." Eddie singsonged, rolling his eyes without hiding his smile this time.

"You love me and you know it" Richie said, toothy grin and all. Though Eddie preferred not answering that question.

As soon as everyone settled up to go to sleep, Eddie felt tears burn his eyes. Feeling Richie pulling him closer to him while he slept made him all the more emotional; you see, he wasn't just afraid of rejection. He didn't want to risk losing what they had: the snarky remarks, the constant bickering, the heart to heart conversations, the totally unnecessary touching, their 'nap dates', their dynamic. Little did he know that what felt like a crush, would turn out to be much more.

And little did he know, that at the same time just a couple blocks far from Bill's house, Sonia was having a very heated conversation.

"For the millionth time, get *out* of my house!" she shrieked, face puffed and red from screaming so much.

"Sonia, we have to talk about this and you know it" a man stood in the doorway, looking green with disgust.

“There is nothing to talk about” she insisted, “may I remind you that you have a restraining order? You CAN’T be here! I could call the police and have you arrested now!”

“That restraining order is *bullshit* and I didn't even come here to fight! I just came here because in *your house* – that, of course, *I* bought – there's something of mine. Very important to me.”

Sonia paled at those words – he didn't know, how could he? That was impossible.

“I want my mother's necklace back. I forgot about it up until now, when –”

“When you decided to get married, so you had to give it to her? Ah! I don't have it, sorry, you can go now” she pushed him out of the house, “go away!”

“That's absurd, Sonia, really?” he was beginning to lose his temper, when a police car stopped in front of the house.

“What's up, you two? We received a call because of the screaming. This man bothering you, Mrs. K?”

She looked evilly at him, with a sick and twisted stare: she knew she could ruin him in that specific moment if she wanted to, though she did nothing but stare at him. He sighed and retreated.

“Not at all, officer!” she called out, “He was just leaving.”

The man left without another word, getting on his car and leaving Derry once again. Sad thing was, he didn't know he had a lot more to come back for than an old necklace.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thank you everyone for your kind words on my first chapter, it was really nice having feedback. <3
Soo...I'm back. As I've already stated before, I write as a coping mechanism and I'm not always able to write big amounts of pages per day, so updates can come sooner or later. Plus I'm about to start university, so adulthood....HERE I COOOME.

3. III

Eddie had no memory of his father whatsoever – according to his mother, he had died of lung cancer when he was one.

Bad smoker was your father, Eddie dear she used to tell him, in the rare moments she spoke of him, *and God made him pay for his vice.*

When he was little, Eddie didn't understand what a vice was, and why God made people pay with life for their mistakes – how did he even take someone's life?

With time, though, he started getting the concept of God more and more. At one point in his life, he even had a terrible fear of him: always went to church, never said bad words and prayed every night. It wasn't because he was moved by sincere faith, but because of the things his mother had pushed into his head.

Only later on, he was able to get rid of that horrible perception of God and eventually, he started to question him and his existence. Stanley had looked at him like he had grown a second head for a while, like he couldn't believe someone even *dared* to think such outrageous things.

Every now and then Eddie thought about his dad, how things would've been if he hadn't died, how many things he could've shared with him...he even wondered if his mother would've been any different.

Lately he found himself crying in shame, thinking of his father and

how he would've felt having a fag as a son. *That* had become a constant thought throughout his days.

But fighting who he was had been just a waste of time and energy so far: in the last month, Eddie had tried forcing himself into sports, into liking cars (because apparently it was a very manly thing to do?), into anything except one thing...girls.

It was weird, thinking that being with a girl in any romantic way possible scared him or even disgusted him. So, on his way to school, Eddie decided that he'd get rid of that one possibility of becoming straight by forcing himself to like girls.

As soon as he was at school, he looked at the first girl that caught his attention: Beverly.

Beverly was, with no doubt whatsoever, *very* pretty.

She had nice hair, a nice smile and cute eyes...but staring at her made him feel nothing at all.

Maybe she's my friend and it's weird, he thought, *maybe I need to try with some other girl.*

"Everything alright, Eddie?" Bev eyed him funny, with a smile on her face.

"Yeah" he replied, quickly blinking out of his thoughts, "just thinking about my homework."

Wow, lame.

He let his eyes wander around the hallways, just as Greta brushed past him giving him a nasty stare. Her perfume filled his lungs as he

scrunched his nose in disgust, looking at her curls and how they fell on her shoulders, the way her hips swayed...there was no doubt at all, Eddie was in fact gay.

But you never know if you never try, right?

So he came up with a whole new plan in his head, only it involved pretending to be straight.

On that same day, Eddie started looking for the perfect girl to experiment with. The problem was, everywhere he looked he saw none that didn't made him gag when he thought of kissing them.

So he looked through all the girls in his English, Biology, Maths classes and settled on none, deciding that he'd give up on it for the day since his last class, Chemistry, was hard and he had to focus on what he was doing in the lab.

As soon as he entered the classroom his eyes started looking for Richie, though he was nowhere to be seen. Nothing new, he must have skipped class...or maybe he was with some girl going at it behind the football field benches. The thought made his skin crawl and his stomach lurch, putting him in a very bad mood.

There were only two spots left: one near Greta Bowie, whom he avoided like the plague, and one near a chubby girl with big glasses.

“Hi” he said, smiling shyly at her “can I pair with you?”

“Yes” she said, looking like the kind of girl who is detached but really nice once she warms up to you “What's your name?”

“Eddie” he said, extending his hand “what about you?”

“Suzie” she finally smiled back, and started chatting about whatever the professor wanted them to do that day.

Eddie really wished he had less on his mind so he could focus on their conversation, but he kept zoning out...until, like the harsh snap of an elastic band on your wrist, he had an idea: *Suzie* was going to be his experiment-girlfriend!

She was just perfect: not too girly, intelligent, nice and didn't smell like she had put three liters of perfume on.

After the lesson, Eddie went home with her number and the hope he could finally become straight.

As he walked home, he stopped by the same dark alley he had stopped by a while ago, but Henry was nowhere to be seen. He didn't know why that thought kept on popping in his head, but it made him feel uncomfortable for some reason.

“Hey, Princess” Belch Huggins grabbed him by the collar of his shirt, making him stumble backwards “whatcha doing here all alone? It's a pretty dark place for a fairy.”

Eddie was red with anger, fear and shame “Don't call me that! And let me go!”

His screaming only irritated the bully, and at his side appeared the other psycho, Patrick Hockstetter “Shut the fuck up or I’ll stick a broom so far up your ass–”

The sentence was cut short when someone punched Patrick right in the face, making him fall, and Belch shouted “What the fuck?! Are you insane?”

Eddie turned around sure to see Mike or Bill or – ignore the lovesick stare –, Richie.

But to his surprise, Henry Bowers stood there, yanking him away from the bully's grip.

“Leave him alone” Henry said “you hear me?”

Eddie had no idea why Henry was so suddenly defending him, and he looked up at him with an expression that screamed fear and confusion.

“What, the freak is your friend now?! Are you all trying to form an alliance or some–” the sentence was cut short again when Henry stomped his foot on the ground.

“Leave. Him. Alone” he said “this is the last time I’m saying this. Next time, you know what comes. And I’m no big mouth...I mean what I say.”

The two looked astonished but went away, leaving Eddie alone with Henry. The other boy started walking away, throwing a “Be careful where you go, brat” at him.

Eddie stood there in shock for a while, until his brain caught up with

the rest of his body and he was struggling to keep up with Bowers
“Hey! Why did you help me?”

The boy didn't answer his question, only kept walking, and Eddie grabbed him by his sleeve repeatedly asking that question.
“Can't you just fucking let me be?!”

“Okay” Eddie said, serious “but just to let you know, I'm not...I'm not what they said I am.”

“I *don't care*” the taller one said, “deny it all you want, you are what you are. Trust me on this one.”

Eddie watched him go away and then yelled a “Thank you!”, to which Bowers responded with “Don't sweat it, brat.”

When Bill received Eddie's call, he was in the middle of a very heated conversation with Stanley.

They had been sitting on Bill's bed for a while, the first with red puffy lips and the latter having two of his shirt's buttons undone .

“Are you – I mean, are you suh-sure?” Bill had interrupted their make out session, half sitting on his bed so he could look at him right in the eye.

And then Stanley had exploded.

“What do you mean? Bill, I've been making out with you for almost a month, we had dates, we had movie nights, I invited you *birdwatching*! I *am* serious about making out and about my feelings, but if you're unsure about yours, then you shouldn't be toying with

other people's emotions like this!”

He had been storing that all inside for a while now, at first patiently waiting for Bill to stop tip toeing around their situation and becoming increasingly irritated every day.

“Suh-sorry for being consid–considerate!” the other one had then yelled, face red. Just as Stanley was about to reply, the phone had rang.

“Yes?” Bill huffed, looking at Stanley with a sideways glance, to which he responded with a death glare “Eddie? Everything okay?”

Stan watched as Bill's expression went from worried to shocked to exhilarated “Bowers punched Hockstetter in the nose because he was picking on you?!”

At this point the fight was momentarily forgotten and Stanley pushed his ear to the phone trying to listen too.

“Yes!” Eddie said, “He went all psycho on them, it was amazing like a scene from a movie!”

“Do you know why he helped you?”

“No” Eddie lied, biting his lip “but I wanted to tell someone and I called your house. Maybe I'll try Richie's later.”

“Okay Eddie. See you tomorrow!”

As Bill hung up, he was still in shock “Can you believe it? Henry helped Eddie? But why? This is insane!”

“Yeah” Stan was frowning so hard his forehead looked like it might break “it's weird. I wouldn't be so enthusiastic about it. What if he's

planning on doing something to him?”

“Always so trusting”

“Always so naive” the other commented, shouldering his backpack

“See you tomorrow, maybe you'll have your feelings sorted by then. Or at least, I hope so.”

Notes for the Chapter:

And here I thought the plot of this story couldn't get more complicated...

So, many of you will probably have guessed where the story is going now that it includes this new character :) sorry for making you wait this long, but as I had mentioned in the previous notes I have started University and I'm spending my days studying and sleeping!

Thank you for all your nice and constructive comments, I'm looking forward to hearing from all of you and more soon!

4. IV

Notes for the Chapter:

Hi!! I'm back :) How are you guys doing? I have had the flu and have used the time to study and update this for y'all! If you liked this chapter, please leave a review and let me know <3

It was two weeks after having met Suzie that Eddie made his first move – or what he thought would be a good first move. They had spent an absurd amount of time together, studying at the library together, pairing up in classes, they even went to grab ice cream together one day.

At first the Losers were a little shocked and offended by the fact that Eddie had made a friend outside of their little group.

“Who is that?” Richie had skeptically said one day, after seeing the two part ways after a brief hug.

“Suzie” Eddie had shrugged it off nonchalantly.

Everyone had looked at him like he had grown a second head, knowing that he wasn't the friendliest of them all. Richie had obviously been the one who commented such a thing out loud, and Eddie hadn't taken it very well.

“Okay, what is it? What's the problem with her? You don't even know her!”

“There's no problem at all, Eddie” Beverly had interjected “it's just

that it's new, having friends outside the Losers Club.”

“How is this fair? *Richie* has friends all over school, *Bill* has friends because he is Bill, you know a bunch of people, Ben does too. Stanley had friends from church. But what, since I'm the big ass weirdo I can't have ONE friend that likes me for who I am?”

“We like you for who you are, too” Stanley said, brows furrowed “we're just looking out for you.”

“Well I don't need your protection! I am not made of china! And again, protect me from what? Suzie from Chem class?” he was furious by then, ignoring the stares people were giving them as they walked through the school parking lot.

“I think you're being over dramatic” Richie said, “she your girlfriend or something?”

There was a beat of silence and they exchanged a look that said a million different things, until Eddie said “Yes.”

Bill nearly choked on his saliva, Stan's brows shot up on his forehead, Beverly looked very pale, Ben was calmly letting everyone settled down and Richie – well, he looked like he might puke.

“What? Is it so surprising that THE loser finally got a girlfriend?”

“No!” they all said in unison, then Bill said “Congrats, Ed-Eddie! We're happy for you!”

“Yeah, when are we going to meet her?” Ben said, smiling warmly at him

Stanley and Beverly just kept staring at him skeptically, exchanging a look that Eddie didn't understand.

“Good thing you found someone who is able to stand your hypochondriac self, Kaspbrak” Richie bitterly said, to which Stan coughed and Richie barked a laugh, suddenly normal “Just kidding, just kidding! Shall we go, fellas?”

And as though nothing had ever happened, they kept on walking to the bus stop.

So, maybe word travels around fast, or maybe they shouldn't have shouted in the middle of the school parking lot, but Suzie showed up on Eddie's porch the same day.

Pounding like crazy, her eyes nearly shot out of her skull as Sonia answered the door looking rather annoyed by the unannounced visit. The woman's eyes, though, lit up seeing a nice, neat girl standing on her porch.

“Hi, my name is Suzie. Is Eddie home?” she politely asked, smiling.

“Yes! He is upstairs, come in young lady. Are you his girlfriend?” Sonia asked, letting her in.

“No, just a friend from school” she said through gritted teeth, thanking the woman for her kindness and going to the room she was directed to.

“Kaspbrak, we need to talk” she said without much preamble,

slamming his bedroom's door shut.

Eddie, in the middle of writing something on a very mysterious sheet of paper, looked terrified of her volcano-like presence “Hi, Suzie, everything alright?”

“No!” she exclaimed, “Why are you telling people I'm your girlfriend? It's freaking rude! I never even knew you liked girls –” she started rambling, hands flying around, until Eddie decided to stop her by kissing her.

It was very brief since she pushed him away, slapping him in the process “What the heck?!”

Eddie wiped at his mouth, only letting out a “Ew.”

“Ew?! I should be the one ewing, Kaspbrak! You owe me an explanation. Now.”

The boy sighed, falling on the bed behind him “I'm sorry, Suzie. I shouldn't have said that and I shouldn't have kissed you, but... shit. I'm in a very complicated situation right now.”

Suzie's eyes softened as she saw his eyes glaze over, and she sat beside him “Eddie, what is it that you go around kissing innocent girls?”

“I think I might be gay” he said, feeling his chest tighten and then explode of freedom by finally saying it out loud “or better, I now know I am gay.”

“And you used me as your experiment or something?” she looked a little bit hurt, but not mad.

“That was the plan” he confessed, “but then I got to know you and you were so kind, intelligent, different from other people...I don't know. I didn't mean to make things go this way.”

“You're lucky I didn't catch feelings” she chuckled, trying to lighten the mood by pinching his side “but again, why kiss me?”

“Because!” he said, frustrated “I wanted to know if there was the slightest bit of a chance I would turn out normal.”

“I do feel flattered, but I'd say there's nothing wrong about liking boys. You like who you like, Eddie, that doesn't make you not-normal” she explained, squeezing his hand “and by what you have told me about them, your friends wouldn't really care if you told them.”

“I wish it were as easy as you say...” Eddie bit his lip, thinking about Richie and the way his curls fell in his eyes, or how extremely tall he had gotten...

“I'm sure you'll figure it out. I need to go now” Suzie announced, standing up “no more ambush kisses to poor girls, Kaspbrak! Go get them boys!”

Sonia had gone out for the evening, leaving Eddie alone.

He decided he'd update his list, so he sat at his desk and began thinking about what he wanted to write.

Weird thing was, that he did have lots of pros in mind, but no cons to match. Plus, the fact that he had admitted to someone the fact that he liked boys had left him in a state of shock, feeling like his chest might explode from happiness and from anxiety at the same time.

Just as he took the pencil in his hand, the phone rang downstairs.

He rushed, taking the steps two at a time, hoping it was one of the Losers that wanted to hang out – he felt like he might die of boredom if he stayed in that house alone for a little longer.

He fell right at the end of the stairs, feeling an annoying pain flashing in his elbow “Shit!”

The phone kept ringing and Eddie scrambled to his feet, only he arrived a minute too late and whoever was calling had hung up.

He cursed a little, then dialed the combination of numbers to see if there were messages left.

After the usual beep, a man spoke through the record “Sonia? It's Frank. Call me as soon as you can. The talk we had isn't over.”

5. V

Henry didn't know exactly what had changed him. Or, better, he did know who changed him, what he didn't know was how and why his transformation had been so abrupt and drastic.

“Hello, sunshine” Henry smiled to Vic as he pulled up in front of an anonymous street, one they had chosen to meet at to be completely casual and make it look as much as a friendly encounter as possible.

You see, Bowers was obsessed with the fact that no one could know about the two of them, no one could know that they were together, because of two completely different reasons: he didn't want his father to know he had a fag son, he already had a lot of shit going on with him and didn't want to add that to his disgrace of a life; and he feared that someone could do to Vic what they had done to Adrian, a lot of time ago now, but it still burnt.

When Henry had first heard the story of Adrian Mellon, back in the Bowers' Gang days, he had laughed along with his friends, but something about it hadn't felt right. Something about the fact that a person had died because of some prick that couldn't keep his opinions to himself upset Henry, and he would only understand why it bothered him so much years later.

Years later he did find out, when he admitted to himself, half crying and half hysterically laughing, that he was in love with Vic.

What made him realize he was utterly, desperately falling for him was a kiss the shy, quiet boy gave him during a damp autumn afternoon.

It had rained up until an hour prior, they had decided to go to an old abandoned park just outside of town because Henry was stressed – you see, things at home sometimes got so bad he had to run away (still does).

Belch and Patrick had stayed at school late, hoping to get the chance to bother some kids.

As soon as they got there, Vic began softly speaking to him about nonsense. At first Henry didn't understand and was very irritated – why should he care about his aunt's fight, or the fact that he wanted to repaint his room?

Then he caught up with his friend, noticing the way he smiled to him while he talked, and it hit him – he was trying to distract him from his shitty life.

Sometime during his continuous chatting, they had sat on a swing.

“I think I want to adopt a cat” Vic had blurted out, “maybe name him Zen.”

“You pussy” Henry rolled his eyes but didn't mean anything by it, “when did you get so soft?”

“Ah” Vic said “it's called growing up. And don't lie to me, Bowers, you haven't kicked a dog or killed a cat in, what, two years? Those were stupid things we did, huh?”

“Yeah, I guess they were” the other one scratched the back of his

neck absentmindedly, “I think Zen would be a cool name.”

Vic smiled again, this time brighter, and Henry felt like a normal boy – not a bully, not a failure, not a violent son of a bitch whose father fucked his life up –, and it was always like that with him. He was different from the others.

“Henry?” Vic had said, leaning extremely close to him.

“Hm?” he had hummed, turning his head to look at him – eyes wide in seeing him so close.

“Sorry” he whispered, and then kissed him.

The thing Henry wouldn't tell anyone, ever, was that he felt like with a single kiss, Vic had turned his life around. He didn't feel fireworks like they said in movies, and it surely was different than kissing girls, but it was astonishing.

“Hey!” he screamed, pushing him away. He stood up, looking as mad as ever “What the fuck was that, dude?”

Vic cowered away from him, hugging his sides “I'm sorry, Hen...”

“Sorry?! Sorry about what, trying to go all homo on me? That is not okay!”

“Don't be offensive!”

“Offensive? You molested me!”

“Oh my god you're being so dramatic, it was just a kiss!”

“Don't say that ever again, we never kissed, never!”

“Yes we did and you probably liked it but you're too stubborn to admit it to yourself!” Vic shouted, going near him again, grabbing him by his shirt “You liked it, Bowers, you kissed back.”

Henry was red from anger or embarrassment or both, and was shaking so violently Vic thought he was going to hit him, and then harshly kissed him again.

“Hen? Everything alright?” Vic sat down in the car besides him, squeezing his hand “You zoned out for a good three minutes.”

Henry pulled his hand away, looking around to make sure no one had seen them “m fine, where do you want to go?”

“I'm craving a milkshake!” Vic exclaimed, “wanna go to that cheap diner on the corner of the street near the movie theater? I always forget the name, but their milkshakes are so good!”

“Sure” Henry said, and right then and there, looking at him, he felt the need to kiss him and make their love public, because something so beautiful couldn't be kept a secret; but right then and there, looking at how absurdly beautiful he was, he couldn't help but imagine Vic's body instead of Mellon's. He shuddered, decided not think about it and started the car to get to the diner.

When they got there, Beverly Marsh was sitting in a booth, alone, hands shaking as she held a cigarette in her hand and started at

nothing in particular, her eyes void of any emotion.

Henry felt sorry for her, but went to the counter anyways to order for his – his what? Boyfriend, of course, though they never really talked about it.

“One large chocolate milkshake with extra whipping cream and strawberries, thank you” he said grumpily, not being able to tear his eyes away from the girl.

He remembered how much pain he put her through, basically putting a target on her back that said 'whore'. The Marsh Girl had been every good mannered boy's parents' nightmare, known because of his stupid friends as an easy girl, one that gave it away like it was running water.

As he slid in the booth in front of Victor, the boy shared a preoccupied look with him.

“You want to check on her?” he asked, “She doesn't look alright.”

“Yeah, she doesn't” Henry agreed “But I mean, I made her life a living hell for years, why would she talk to me or even want my help?”

Victor shrugged, and the boy huffed before sliding out of the booth. As Beverly noticed that they were approaching her, her eyes showed fear, anger and sadness all together “What do you want?”

“Calm down” Victor said, putting his hands up “You just seemed a little shaken.”

“Hey!” Stuttering Bill shouted from the main door, followed suit by Stanley Uris, Ben Hanscom and Mike Hanlon “Leave her alone, a-

asshole!”

“What the fuck is your problem, dick?” Victor aggressively defended him, taking one step forward.

Henry put a hand on his shoulder to stop him, shaking his head “S okay, Vic, let's go.”

The two grabbed their things and left, all while Bill glared at them.

“What was that about, Hen?! They have no right to talk to you like that” Victor was fuming to say the least, getting in his car with an angry slam of the door.

Henry sighed, “They are right, why would they trust me? After all I've done to them. Let's just go, okay?”

At the same time, on the other side of town, Eddie was having a nervous breakdown.

Apparently, his mother had decided it was a good time to start snooping around in his room, and she had found his list – the List.

When he had come home from school, he had found her sitting on his bed with a grave expression and the piece of paper in one hand “Eddie, we need to talk”.

“Like hell we will” he immediately said, trying to snatch the list from her hands, but she was quick enough to move to the side a little. “Eddie, it's best if you stay put and make this easy, okay? I don't want to make things worse for you any further”.

“There is really nothing to talk about, that's just how things are. I am gay, homosexual, a fag, a trick of nature, a monster! You either

accept it or learn to live without thinking about it, because I have no intention whatsoever of faking who I am for you!”

“I am your mother and you will show me respect!” she yelled, and the last word was accompanied by a slap on his right cheek.

He looked at her with eyes full of shock and tears, humiliated by her action and the way she was treating him – like had no choice but to do what she wanted him to, to be who she wanted him to.

But Eddie wasn't about to go back to that hypochondriac, scared little kid, no sir. Eddie Kaspbrak was his own person, and no one was ever going to take that from him.

“Get out of my room” he said, voice firm “Out! Now!”

“You'll regret it, Eddie” she insisted, “I want this to go the best way possible”.

“I don't care” and with those last, venomous words, he watched her get out of his room before collapsing on the bed and crying.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hiii! Here's the new chapter and, as promised, Henry's side of the story. I always thought there's so much potential in his personal background, so here's how I decided to work with his this time around. Leave a review? <3

6. VI

What Sonia meant by making him regret his choice was, stalking him and cornering him in every moment of the day she could, talking his ear off about being confused, about the rejection he would have to endure, about the fact that Richie would hate him and his group of friends would probably leave him alone, too; then he'd spend the rest of his life targeted as the fag of the town who thought he was brave enough to come out but then ended up alone.

The thing was, Eddie didn't have time for her bullshit – he could only think of that one phone call, of that voice, that *name*. Frank. It couldn't be, though, could it? His mother could be a sick bitch but she wouldn't lie to him about his father, now would she?

When he got to school that morning, the morning after his fight with her, he had his list in his backpack, too afraid to leave it home. He had been stupid enough already, leaving it around while he wasn't home. Not stupid: naive. So naive he thought his mother was going to at least respect the privacy of his room.

“Fucking bitch” he muttered as he went inside, the weather starting to get freezing in mid November. As soon as he got to the Losers' usual spot, he told them “Can I call a group meeting this afternoon at the Clubhouse? I need your help.”

Everyone agreed and he failed to notice that Beverly looked broken: red eyes, puffy cheeks, empty stare. The fire in her hair did nothing to light her soul as it used to, and the glint in her eyes was gone too. Ben was beside her, but he couldn't touch her: every time he tried to, she flinched away; with each flinch, she broke his heart.

That was Eddie Kaspbrak's first mistake – purposefully or not, he had been neglecting his friends, his family, his only hope.

Richie gave him a sideways glance, like he wanted to tell him something. He wanted so indeed: alert him in some way that something was wrong, that Beverly needed support from all of them, yet Eddie seemed too caught up in his own world. He was frowning so hard it looked like he was about to explode, and Bill felt distraught just by taking a look at his friends. Everyone, in some way or other, was broken.

“I'll take Bev to class” Ben whispered, taking her hand and leading her away from the rest of the group. Stanley looked at Bill and the two went away, leaving Richie and Eddie.

“Ah, off they go” Richie commented, putting an arm around his friend's shoulders “shall we go too, my lady?”

“Don't call me that” Eddie frowned, taking in his scent and bathing in Richie's affection – whenever he was with him, he remembered how much he craved it. He craved his hands on him, his eyes on him, his full attention. For a moment he let himself have it, imagine what it must have felt like being with him, as boyfriends.

“Sorry, sorry” Richie chuckled, “when did you get so small?”
“When did you get so tall?”

“I guess you got me, Spaghetti. So, what have you been up to lately? I haven't seen you much. I miss hanging out with you” he sighed, then quickly added “and the others, of course. But it's not the same if

you're not there.”

“I have discovered something” Eddie solemnly announced, leaning closer to whisper to him “I was gonna talk about it today, but why not tell you sooner? A man called my house – don't make jokes right now. He said his name was Frank, and he needed to talk to my mother. Richie – do you think my mom could've lied to me about my father being dead?”

His friend was silent for a while, all traces of foolishness gone from his face, he then said “Shit, Eds, I thought you were gonna tell me something different, not this...shit. Okay. Let's stay calm, we can solve this today at the Clubhouse. How are you feeling?”

Eddie didn't know what to answer: how should he feel? Betrayed, scared, uncertain, confused, stressed? “Just peachy, Rich, just peachy.”

Richie picked Eddie up to go to the Clubhouse together, hoping he'd have the courage and the chance to tell him about Beverly. So, while they were walking side by side and he was telling some stupid joke about his mom, he blurted out “I need to talk to you about something bad, but very important.”

And so he told him everything, in one go, scared he'd feel too sick to finish the story if he stopped to breathe.

He told Eddie about how she had called him in tears, saying she needed somewhere to go and hide, because something terrible had happened. He had ran to her house and had found her half naked on the bathroom floor, bruises everywhere and her father was unconscious in the kitchen. None of them ever thought that he was

going to go that far, *abuse* her...

Eddie's stomach lurched when Richie said that word. He had hoped until the end of the story it wouldn't come out of his mouth, that it was one of those bad nights Beverly could have escaped from. But it wasn't, this time she had been hurt, and she probably would've suffered from it for her whole life.

As soon as they got there, Eddie barreled into the Clubhouse and frantically looked for her.

When he saw her, sitting in a corner of the room with her eyes cast down and her usual glow missing, he stopped dead in his tracks. The redhead lifted her head up and looked at him, a small smile playing on the corner of her lips, even though her eyes looked empty. When their eyes met, Eddie felt his breath itch and big tears began rolling down his cheeks.

"Bev..." he croaked out, feeling all the emotions from the past month crush him. He shot forward just as she tried to stand up and hugged her tightly, Eddie being the first one who could touch her without her flinching away.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry"

"You have nothing to be sorry for, Eddie" she whispered, crying too and hugging him back "though if you try and replace me, the only woman in your life, with that Suzie girl I swear I'll kill you".

"Replace you? Impossible" he exclaimed, and the two stayed like that for what seemed like an eternity.

He felt really stupid: in a crisis because he thought he was gay, while

this girl in his arms managed to smile after what she had just been through.

When Bill cleared his throat they finally separated “Eddie? Did you have something to tell huh-us?”

“Yes” he sighed, and then stood so he was facing the rest of his friends “These days I haven't been very present...”

“That would be an understatement”

“Stan, let him finish!”

“ But...something happened. And I don't know how to solve this situation without your help, guys. A man called while my mom was away, he said his name was Frank. My father's name was Frank, too, and he sounded alarmed, said he needed to talk to her as soon as possible.”

“Didn't you ask who it was?” Ben asked, very curious but also understanding why his friend looked so troubled.

“It was a recorded call because I couldn't make it to the phone in time.”

“Shit” Beverly cursed, kicking one of the wooden pillars, then throwing everything she could reach while cursing. The anger turned to sobs and Ben hugged her tight.

“Can't you see how fucked up this is?” she was bawling her eyes out “Each of us, for some reason or another, has a fucked up life. And our parents are always at fault!”

“Ben, get out a-and let her cuh-calm down...” Bill suggested, his stutter now a little more prominent. As the two of them climbed out of the Clubhouse, he continued “I don't know if Sonia would lie to you about something like that, but given her past...I'd say we better come up with a plan right now.”

“Mission: Fuck That Lying Cow starts today!” Richie exclaimed, determined, and that time no one told him to shut up.

Because everyone in the room had the same thought: if Sonia Kaspbrak had hidden something so important to Eddie for all those years, he would be broken. And they would've crushed her.

7. VII

As it happened every time one of them needed help or was in a particularly bad situation, the Losers became a killing machine: each of them had a task to complete in order to help Eddie, then they'd meet at the Clubhouse again to see what they had found out and discuss another important theme: Beverly.

As for the moment, she was rotating from Ben's to Richie's to Bill's nonstop, and she was sure her father must be livid because she had practically kicked him senseless and had then ran away. Going back there was not an option, not even if she chose to: her friends would physically make it impossible for her to go back to that hellhole of a house, but they also knew that sooner or later Alvin Marsh was going to go to the police.

“This is just stupid” Eddie muttered under his breath as he and Richie hid behind a tree near his house, waiting for Mrs. K to leave for her usual afternoon activities.

“Come on, Eds, it's better than sitting in your room waiting for your mom to become big enough to occupy the whole living room” Richie commented, pressing his body against his and feigning to suffocate.

“Shut up, will ya?” Eddie rolled his eyes but couldn't help snort a little at his stupid jokes. They were kinda funny, though he would never admit that to his friend: the Losers would never hear the end of it.

Just as they were about to start bickering as usual, Mrs. K came out of the front door – *I'm surprised she even fits in there, Eds* – and got into

the car, driving away without noticing them.

When the car was out of sight, the two came out of their hiding spot and headed inside, going straight for her bedroom.

It was weird, for Eddie, to be there: he didn't ever recall spending time with her as a kid except for the constant nagging, the endless hours of watching her stupid show on TV or the doctor appointments. So his mother room was some kind of forbidden territory for him, especially ever since they had their big fight years ago and they barely spoke anymore.

“Hope we don't catch the cooties” Richie snickered, and Eddie rolled his eyes.

“What does this even have to do with cooties? I'd have them too by now, asshole, and don't mention them 'cause I get paranoid and itchy!”

True to his words, he had started scraping the base of his neck.

Eddie went to open her nightstand's drawer, but he found it was locked with a key. Frowning, he tried opening the dresser and it was locked too. Same thing with every other drawer in the room. Richie cursed as he mumbled about her being a very sick bitch, and Eddie sighed as he let go of the idea of snooping around her room.

“I wish I had brought my lock picking asset, Spaghetti. I could've helped” Richie sighed, shaking his head. Eddie just shrugged and told him not to worry, and the two headed back to the Clubhouse.

Beverly and Ben were thinking of going to the Library to check on

the death records of Derry, but apparently luck wasn't exactly on their side: Alvin Marsh, looking like a psycho on the loose, saw them from his spot on a bench nearby and dropped his beer can to the ground. He stood up and stormed in their direction, yelling obscenities at his daughter.

Beverly felt her legs trembling as she looked at her father coming for her.

He's gonna get me and it's gonna be worse than before, she internally screamed but on the outside she looked like she was frozen.

“Shit!” Ben cursed, grabbing her arm and dragging her with him; when he noticed she wasn't responding, he yelled “Bev! We gotta run!”

She seemed to snap out of it momentarily, just enough to comprehend it was a swim or drown situation, and bolted towards the outskirts of Derry, following Ben as he ran, too.

They heard Alvin scream and shout “You whore! You're just like your mother, come back here or else you'll end up just like her – DEAD!”

Ben flinched and felt a mixture of anger and disgust towards that man, but he knew he couldn't possibly stand a chance against him.

“Bev! We can't lead him to the Clubhouse” he shouted, short of breath because of the constant running “let's go to Mike's!”

Without even thinking about it, they changed their route.

Beverly liked the Hanlons, they were kind and warm and never judged her like the other Losers' families did.

She remembered when Mike's grandpa sat down with her, one evening, and asked her why she was so sad. When she didn't answer, he told her that whatever it was, she had to face it.

We all have a war to fight during our lives, young girl, he had sighed, and yours may be more painful than others. But keep holding on. And if you ever need help, you know where the farm is.

After what felt like an eternity, the reached the farm fence and climbed it, running through the familiar orchard towards the main house.

Mike's grandfather Leroy was sitting on the porch on a rocking chair, looking at the sky, and he stood up in alarm when he noticed the kids being followed by Alvin Marsh.

He cursed under his breath and quickly opened the front door for them to get inside, closing it just as Beverly's father reached the house.

"What the hell do you think you're doing?!" Alvin yelled, going for the door when he was stopped by the man standing in front of it, arms crossed.

"May I ask you what you're doing on my property?" he coldly asked, eyes full of disdain.

It wasn't like no one knew what kind of monster the man in front of him was – if one could even call him a man. He was abusive, violent and an alcoholic. God knew what kind of hell the Marsh girl had been through to gather up the courage to run away.

"Let me the fuck in! That bitch is my daughter and she's gonna come home with *me*! You hear me, Bevvie? You're coming back home!" he tried to barge in but Mike's grandfather was in front of him right away.

"I think you should leave" he stated, arms still crossed "if you don't want me to call the cops on you, *Mr. Marsh*" he said his last name with a heavy hint of disgust.

Alvin spat to his feet and grunted "This isn't over, you and your nigger family are gonna regret this."

Leroy watched him go away until he was out of sight, then rushed inside to see Ben kneeling down, hugging Beverly as she sobbed uncontrollably.

He silently went to the kitchen and put the kettle on the stove with some water on, getting the mugs and the tea bags ready; he then proceeded to take a soft blanket and gave it to Ben, telling him to get her to the couch.

A few minutes later, he was back in the living room with a tray, on it two mugs full of lemon tea and some cookies "Here, have this. My wife used to do this for me every night at around 6 pm. No matter how hard of a day I had had, that always made it better."

Beverly wasn't crying anymore, but she was still visibly shaken; she smiled at him nonetheless, taking the mug in her hands and inhaling deeply the lemony, earthy smell.

"Thank you, Mr." Ben whispered, shy as always even after years of spending time there with the Losers.

"Call me Leroy, son, already told ya a million times" he snorted, appreciating his politeness anyways. "I won't try and guess what happened, Mrs. Marsh, but I want you to know you are welcome to

stay here, should you feel unsafe at home.”

Beverly's lower lip trembled before she erupted in a fit of sobs and thank yous, chocking on her words and almost dropping her cup.

Leroy's heart ached at the thought of what she must have been through, and he simply huffed out a 'don't worry, Mrs. Marsh' as he stood up and gave the two of them privacy.

Stanley and Mike had went for a totally different plan: they went around Derry, the first with a notebook in his hands and the latter with a recorder, pretending to be writing something epic about Derry's history.

One thing about small towns is that, rumors travel around *very* fast, and the elders always knew everything about everyone.

“Wait, why are you t-two going t-together?” Bill had asked, a little bit hurt by the fact that Stan had been purposefully avoiding him for a while now.

“Stan looks pretty nerdy” Mike explained, getting elbowed in the ribs without even wincing “have to keep it believable, right? And I'm talkative, surely he wouldn't randomly approach strangers.”

So the two found themselves wandering around the park and the little square, where all the elderly people usually spent their afternoons, maybe gossiping about this or that matter.

“Hello, ma'am” Mike went up to an old lady sitting on a bench under a tree and reading a book. She looked friendly enough. “We are trying to write something on the history of Derry. Would you like to contribute to our project?”

“Of course, young men” she smiled at them and closed her book, hands in her lap “though I wouldn't know where to start from...”

“Maybe give us a little insight on how things were when you were younger?” Stan asked, faking scribbling something on his notebook.

Mike nervously glanced at him as he elbowed him in the ribs, coughing “Don't say that!”

“It's okay, he's right: I'm far from young” she laughed kindheartedly “I'm sure the son of the Rabbi would never say something mean, now would he?”

Stan was surprised she knew him, but that confirmed their theory: old people sure knew everything about this town.

They listened to her talk for a good fifteen minutes before proceeding with step 2.

“Oh, no!” Mike exclaimed, “I think we left Eddie alone at the Barrens, Mrs. K is gonna go nuts!”

“Sonia Kaspbrak, you say?” she chimed in, face grave “You better go get that boy, poor son.”

“I'm going and we'll come back in a while, okay Mike? You stay here and take notes” he handed him the notebook, then slowly walked away.

“Why did you say poor son?” Mike inquired, tilting his head to the side.

“Sonia was always a difficult woman. Always had to have the men in her life chained to her. Then, after the story with her ex husband, Frank...she worsened.”

Mike didn't say anything, too worried he'd snatch her out of those memories and she'd stop talking.

“Poor man has always been a ray of sunshine, a breath of fresh air! But she wanted to control him, to decide every single step of his life. They got into a big argument, one night – rumor has it he hit her!”

Mike's eyes threatened to fall out of his skull as he learned the news; Eddie surely wasn't going to like it.

“Things got ugly...He got restraining order, on her demand, and one day he just decided to leave Derry and start his life elsewhere. But I guess I talked too much, now did I?” she said, shaking her head and standing up “It was a pleasure talking to you, Mike. I hope we get to

talk another time.”

The boy bid her goodbye and bolted towards the Clubhouse, where he knew Stanley would be waiting for him: they had big fucking news.